

A CHRISTMAS STORY

With Mighty Little Sentiment and
No Tears in It.

A strong odor of stale beer and tobacco preceded him, and a neglect to avail himself of the elevator had rather winded him. He braced up in a moment, however, and as he seated himself beside our desk he was quite himself again. He must have divined our thoughts, for he quickly said:

"You were about to do me an injustice, unintentionally, of course, but an injustice, nevertheless. No; I am not in need of a bite, nor does a debased appetite crave a drink."

Once more he must have divined our thoughts.

"You are at a loss to know, then, what I do want. I will inform you," he continued, settling himself back more comfortably in the chair, and drawing from an inside pocket a soiled and worn bundle of manuscript. "At this season of the year, when all hearts are presumed to be overflowing with peace and good will, it is fitting and appropriate that the Christmas story should appear in every well regulated journal. Experience has taught me, however, that such stories as a rule are too full of sadness. This should not be. There should be more of joyousness permeating them, if I may apply that expression. As the editor of a great and influential journal, I feel that you agree with me. With such an end in view I have written one which I believe will fully meet with our views. It was written with no desire for pecuniary gain. Some twenty-five cents were expended by me for paper and ink in connection with it, however, and I feel that in asking you to reimburse me to that extent I will be merely giving you the opportunity to join me in making glad some weary, careworn soul. Thanks. No; I do not desire my name to appear. Not fame, but the happiness of my race is my object."

This is the story he wrote:

AFTER MANY DAYS;

OR,

FILLED AT LAST.

CHAPTER I.

It is noon.

It is noon in the calm, still town of Georgetown. It is also noon in one or two other towns as still and as calm as Georgetown. But as to the latter, particularly.

CHAPTER II.

As the bells of the town proclaim the noon hour, Mrs. Sarah Snickworthy and her seven fair daughters seat themselves at the midday meal, set in their plain but dilapidated mansion standing near where the waters of the Potomac rise and fall. One vacant chair pathetically tells its tale! William, the son and brother, is late, as usual.

CHAPTER III.

William Snickworthy, our hero, is the only son of his mother—the only brother of seven sisters. Bill's lot, therefore, is a sad one. Yet, William is both noble and good; as, indeed, all well regulated heroes should be. William is also 15 years of age. But, notwithstanding his nobleness and his goodness, his youthful years, and the fact that he invariably becomes an earnest and devout member of at least eleven different Sunday schools immediately preceding each recurring Christmas, Bill's worth is unappreciated, unnoticed. Even now, as he slides with all the touching meekness of the average boy to the table, and hastily fills his mouth to such an extent that standing room only is obtainable within, Fate's dark clouds lower about him, and the unsympathetic voice of his mother breaks the awful silence:

"Bill, fore you tech er nuther mouthful, run to th' pump fer er bucket of water."

CHAPTER IV.

All eyes are turned upon William. "Dog gone it," he says, as he vainly endeavors to hide his emotions and more dinner, "ef I aint tired of this. 'Specially when a fellow is enjoyin' hisself in th' bosom of his family. Darn ef I aint tired of runnin' fer water, mother."

Mary Liz, the eldest Miss Snickworthy, catches the speaker's eye.

"Law, Ma, jes listen to that boy. A livin' disgrace to the whole family. But what else is to be expected of men or boys, I'd like to know. Goodness knows, they're of no slight use in creation!"

William is recognized.

"That's what they all say, sister mine, when gals git left. It's hard luck, Mary Liz, an' I weeps fer you, old gal. But don't give up, sweet gal, there's lots of fools 'mongus men."

Miss Snickworthy scornfully ignores her brother's eloquent remarks. Springing up from the table, he picks up an old tin pail and pulls open the door. Standing just without, he exclaims:

"Mother, this is the last time Bill Snickworthy waters this stock. See! Au revoir, ladies." And William and the pail are gone.

CHAPTER V.

Alongside her wharf lies the good ship Susan Jane, ready to sail for foreign shores. Toward her Tom Topper wends his way.

Thomas is of some 17 years of age, and of the decided opinion that virtue is not its own reward. Just why he stopped on reaching the old pump may, perhaps, never be known. Perhaps he was thirsty. But stop and drink he did, and as he elegantly yet simply wiped his mouth by drawing his coat sleeve across it, Mr. Snickworthy, pail attached, approached.

"Shiver me timbers," cried Thomas, with an approved nautical hitch and roll. "Where bound, Bill Snickworthy?"

"To this very pump, my hearty, for a cargo of water," replied Bill, meekly endeavoring to assume the easy nautical form of Mr. Topper.

"Well, you are a landlubber, an' no mis-

take, Bill," tauntingly replies Thomas. Hauling water for a lot of land sharks, eh! Why don't you ship your cable an' set sail?"

"What do you mean, Tom? Run away?" gasps William.

"Why, of course I does. On the Susan Jane, here. With me."

"When? Now?"

"Cert! Are you with me?"

"Darn ef I aint Tom."

CHAPTER VI.

Soon the Susan Jane cast off her moorings and sailed away. The empty pail lay hidden near the old pump.

Long that day the Widow Snickworthy and the various Misses Snickworthy waited, but neither William nor the pail returned. The world rolled on, the sun sank to rest, and the stars looked down upon a Williamless, pailless home.

CHAPTER VII.

Months, years have passed. A night as dark and fearful as the gloom of the regions of evil has fallen upon the distant sea through which the old ship Susan Jane (Messrs. Topper and Snickworthy aboard) uneasily plunges. The stars of heaven are hidden behind dark, angry clouds, the waters roll mountain high, while the wind shrieks and roars through the rigging of the good old ship.

Captain Barnacle, himself, is on deck. "Bad outlook ahead, Cap'n," cries old Ben Mainbrace, the first mate.

"Aye, aye," roars the Captain. "Looks as if we'll all be a-steerin' a different course 'fore daybreak!"

The day and the Susan Jane broke simultaneously. The sun came up—the Susan Jane went down.

CHAPTER VIII.

Christmas Day, twenty years later. The snow lies deep and hard, the day is bright and clear, and glad bells ring the praise of Him whose words of "Peace! Good will to men," coming down through the ages are yet as full of sweet comfort and hope as in the days He spoke, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

Upon the wharf, from which twenty years before the good ship Susan Jane sailed away, never again to be heard of, stands a man of some 35 years of age.

"Nothing is changed. Georgetown is still Georgetown. The old wharf is even as it was then. And—Great heavens! Can it still be there? No, no; it must have gone years since. Yet, let me gaze once again upon the spot."

CHAPTER IX.

Again it is noon. Once more, around the midday meal on this joyous Christmas Day the Widow Snickworthy and her daughters seven gather. Neither time nor hymn has diminished their number.

"Ma," says Mary Liz, pausing for a moment in her terrible onslaught upon a portion of the antiquated fowl selected to do the honors of the day, "my nose itches like all creation. Some stranger is comin', sure as I'm born."

"Ma," says she, "Bill," faintly suggests Matilda Josephine, the very youngest Miss Snickworthy.

"Don't 'spose anything so downright silly, 'Tilda," remarks Miss Mary Elizabeth.

"But, ain't it just likely to happen?" inquires Miss Hannah Pauline Snickworthy. "An' if Bill should come, Ma, now what would you say?"

But before Sarah Snickworthy has time to reply, the door is thrown wide open, and William Snickworthy, grown to manhood, bronzed by wind and sun, stands before them with the same old pail filled to overflowing with the water which twenty years before he was ordered to bring.

"Yes, mother," he says, setting the pail down and throwing his arms around her, "what do you say now, when long years have passed, when, after shipwreck and a lifetime spent in foreign lands, I have at last obeyed your command and place before you the pail of water you bade me bring?"

"What do I say?" she repeats, and the seven Misses Snickworthy rise to catch her reply. "Well, I do say, William, that you've been long 'nuff a-gittin' it!"

THEY FAIL IN JOURNALISM.

What Sir Edwin Arnold Says of Successful Novelists.

Detroit News.

"It is a matter worthy of note that novelists do not make good journalists, as a rule," said Sir Edwin Arnold this morning. "I have tried many of them, and in the majority of cases the brightest writers of fiction, men whose fame is dear to all England, have been lamentable failures as journalists. There was Charles Reade, who always was a forcible, effective writer of prose, a man who could strike in a powerful manner when he felt so inclined. This was certainly the kind of material of which a good journalist should be composed, and Mr. Reade became a member of the *Telegraph* staff. There he displayed those other qualities of the novelist—lack of method for everyday application and a tendency to wait until the spirit moved him. That is all very well for a great work of fiction which should be carried around in your head, perhaps many years, until every detail stands forth and the conception is nowhere illogical or false. But a newspaper must come out every day and current comment made. Many other great novelists have failed as journalists. I consider Mr. Sala one of our brightest and wildest editorial writers."

An episode was to-day related by Sir Edwin Arnold, which will illustrate his kindly nature. In Albany an old lady, an admirer of his works, wrote asking permission to call upon him. Sir Edwin, after remarking that he felt highly flattered, wrote denying the request, but asking permission to call upon her.

Messrs. Robinson, Parker & Co., corner Twelfth and F streets northwest, have a most realistic window display, representing a coasting scene, with boys actually coasting down hill, and, to make it more natural, from 7 to 9 o'clock every evening there is a real snow storm. It is a very interesting exhibit and attracts large crowds.

SOME FACTS FROM CHINA.

Interesting Statistics About the Vast Empire and Its People.

Pittsburg Dispatch.

Not many years ago the population of China was estimated at about 500,000,000 souls. This was reduced ten years ago to 405,000,000. More recent and thorough investigation, the result of which has just been published by famous German statisticians, Supan and Wagner, places the number at 350,000,000.

As these figures have been arrived at after an immense amount of labor and care, it is hardly likely they will be changed in any great degree by future estimates. As will be observed, the last reduces the first figures 150,000,000, or nearly two and a half times the population of the United States. Truly a tremendous difference, but has the reader ever stopped to consider the immensity of the figures remaining. Idly sounding them on the tongue gives one no real idea of what is comprised in a number reaching nine figures, especially when that number represents human beings. Three hundred and fifty million is within 7,370,000 of the population of entire Europe. If China organized its army on a basis comparative with those of European governments and went to war it would require a combination embracing every country on the European continent to resist the invader. The wonderful army of Xerxes would be as nothing in comparison with the Mongolian horde.

Another way is to take the total population and compare it with anything else of magnitude that can be reduced to simple figures. For instance, if you stood every Chinese individual on his feet and side by side, allowing eighteen inches for each one, you would have a continuous line 93,432 miles long, or very nearly four times around the earth. Stand them on top of each other, feet on head, and allowing an average stature of five feet six inches to each individual, and you would have a string of Chinamen that would reach to the moon, around it, and half way back to the earth on the other side. If each person in China consumes an average of five pounds of food daily, it would require 319,375,000 tons to feed the people a year.

There is only one small thing about the Chinese nation and that is its national debt. That amounts to only \$38,500,000. It strikes me as being greatly to the credit of a people, who could free themselves entirely from obligation by an assessment of eleven cents per capita. In our own country, with all its greatness, about \$24.90 would be required from every man, woman, and child to square our account completely.

Grand Holiday Opening at the Palace Stores of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

Seventh street was never so crowded with people as it was last Tuesday evening. The occasion of the throng was the annual holiday opening of the palace stores of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. The forty-nine clerks who were in attendance were kept busy as bees in harvest time, taking orders for Teas, Coffees, Sugars and Baking Powders, also between times, the large corps of pleasant clerks were presenting handsome flowers and the beautiful "Home Guard Christmas Panel" to each visitor who honored this grand opening with their presence. The Home Guard is entirely original—it is a superb picture—representing the happy face of a 3-year-old boy, in full uniform, with a toy gun, bugle, sword, drum, and a little helmet on his head, and he seems to be the happiest little Home Guard in all Christendom. This panel picture is handsome enough to adorn any family parlor in the National Capital. This company controls 225 stores throughout the United States, representing \$25,000,000, having their headquarters at 35 and 37 Vesey street, New York City. During the opening, the ladies and others, received through the courtesy of the genial manager, over 12,000 fresh cut and fragrant flowers, and 8,000 of the "Home Guard Panels." The stores, 501 and 503 (which are the main establishments), are centrally located at the corner of Seventh and E streets, northwest. The two large and well-arranged stores were beautifully illuminated, there being 150 incandescent and two very large electric lights, with 350 gas jets, in all, it was a grand and magnificent spectacle, far surpassing anything of the kind that has ever been witnessed in the Capital city, and far eclipsing any of their former openings. The stores were elegantly decorated with exotic cut flowers, pot plants, ferns, etc., also handsome French plate mirrors, Chinese and Japanese lanterns, all of an elaborate character. Taking in the whole situation at a glance one would almost imagine that they were in the Orient where these excellent tea and flower canons and plants were furnished by the well-known florists, Messrs. Strauss & Co., and the draperies and hangings were kindly loaned for the occasion by Mr. Thomas D. Singleton, the prominent Seventh-street merchant. The draperies and other hangings were artistically arranged by one of Mr. Singleton's skilled workmen, and take it all together it presented an unique and Oriental appearance. There was a constant throng of people early in the day wending their way to the grand holiday opening and it lasted until late in the night. As an opening and a business enterprise it was surely a grand success. All the details were under the immediate supervision of the enterprising business manager, Mr. N. H. Bowman, to whom it reflects a great deal of credit, not only for the satisfactory termination of Friday's opening enterprise, but for his business sagacity as manager ever since their first opening in this city years ago. It might be truthfully said that these three large stores with branches in every market are "the Queen Bees" in their line of goods in the National Capital, because their business in Teas, Coffees, and Baking Powders have grown to immense proportions on account of excellent management, fair dealings, and selling pure, straight goods. His corps of obliging salesmen vied with each other to assist their manager in carrying out the minute details, and the pretty young lady cashier was busy during the entire opening taking in the cash and giving the correct change. The opening was a happy termination of a well-planned system of details by the manager, Mr. Newton H. Bowman.

Lower Still the Waists Are Cut.

New York Evening World.

The latest thing in a dancing toilet or opera-box is a bare back, unmasked bosom and perfumed shoulders. Waists are cut low—to the line of degradation—and buds, belles, young married women, wrinkled up spinsters, and fat old grannies with bulging pocketbooks order them, pay for them, and wear them on every ceremonious occasion without a flicker of shame or a blush of modesty. It's the fashion in high life.

If you haven't already gotten one of our \$2.90 Suits or Overcoats you should get one this week. They will all be gone by Christmas. Elmsman Bros., 7th and E.

Gill's Marshmallows, 11th and F.

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